NCA
VOC FOR PGM/FN
BACKGROUNDER NO. 5-5895 JUNE 18, 1978
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THE NEUTRON BOMB AND THE SS-20

ANNCR:

THE CURRENT UNITED NATIONS DISARMAMENT CONFERENCE HAS BROUGHT TO THE FORE THE QUESTION OF WEAPONRY AT THE DISPOSAL OF THE UNITED STATES AND THE SOVIET UNION. VOA'S JULIAN GORSKI LOOKS AT TWO PARTICULARLY CONTROVERSIAL WEAPONS.

VOICE:

MUCH HAS BEEN SAID AND WRITTEN ABOUT THE AMERICAN ENHANCED RADIATION WEAPON -- COMMONLY KNOWN AS THE NEUTRON BOMB. MOSCOW HAS DENOUNCED IT AS AN "INHUMANE, BARBAROUS WEAPON." AND OTHER CRITICS HAVE NOTED -- CORRECTLY OR OTHERWISE -- THAT "IT KILLS PEOPLE BUT SAVES PROPERTY." IT'S TRUE THAT THE NEUTRON WEAPON IS CAPABLE OF KILLING PEOPLE BY LETHAL RADIATION WITHIN A DISTANCE OF ONE AND ONE HALF KILOMETERS WITHOUT DAMAGING MILITARY HARDWARE. MORE IMPORTANTLY, HOWEVER IT DOES NOT AFFECT LIVING BEINGS BEYOND THAT RANGE. IT IS, AS U.S. OFFICIALS HAVE POINTED OUT ON NUMEROUS OCCASIONS, A TACTICAL WEAPON DESIGNED TO HALT AN ARMORED ONSLAUGHT BY WARSAW PACT NATIONS,AHICH HOLD A THREE-TO-ONE TANK SUPERIORITY OVER NATO FORCES IN CENTRAL EUROPE.

PRESIDENT CARTER DECIDED A COUPLE OF MONTHS AGO TO DEFER PRODUCTION OF THE NEUTRON WEAPON IN THE HOPE OF GETTING COMMENSURATE CONCESSIONS FROM THE SOVIET UNION. SPECIFICALLY, WESTERN OBSERVERS POINT OUT, THE UNITED STATES AND ITS WESTERN ALLIES ARE CONCERNED OVER THE SS-20 MISSILES DEPLOYED IN THE WESTERN REACHES OF THE SOVIET UNION AND CAPABLE OF HITTING VIRTUALLY ANY TARGET IN WESTERN EUROPE -- INCLUDING LARGE POPULATION CENTERS.

IN ADDITION TO ITS LONG-RANGE CAPABILITY, THE SOVIET ROCKET -- UNLIKE AMERICA'S NEUTRON WEAPON -- CARRIES THREE INDEPENDTLY-TARGETED NUCLEAR WARHEADS, EACH ONE THOUSAND OF TIMES MORE POWERFUL THAN THE NEUTRON WEAPON. MOREOVER, THE SS-20S ARE SOLID-PROPELLENT ROCKETS HOUSED IN LAND-BASED MOBILE LAUNCHERS, WHICH MAKE THEM DIFFICULT TO MONITOR WITH EXISTING MEANS OF VERIFICATION.

VICE PRESIDENT WALTER MONDALE, SPEAKING AT THE CURRENT UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON DISARMAMENT, DESCRIBED THE SS-20 AS "THE MOST SIGNIFICANT DEVELOPMENT" IN SOVIET NUCLEAR FORCES. THE MISSILE, HE NOTED, IS CAPABLE OF STRIKING TARGETS NOT ONLY IN WESTERN EUROPE, BUT IN ASIA, AFRICA AND THE MIDDLE EAST. ITS

DEPLOYMENT, HE ADDED, "RUNS COUNTER" TO ALL THAT THE U.N. DISARMAMENT SESSION IS TRYING TO ACHIEVE.

NONETHELESS, WHILE MOSCOW HAS NOT CEASED ITS ATTACKS ON PRESIDENT CARTER'S DECISION TO DEFER THE PRODUCTION OF THE NEUTRON WEAPON -- RATHER THAN SCRAP IT ALTOGETHER -- IT MAINTAINS COMPLETE SILENCE ON THE DEPLOYMENT OF THE SS-20 MISSILE.

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